Cimbidium 2 e 6.
(1-16).

17

MISS PECK'S ADVENTURES.

See Page 8

MISS PECK'S ADVENTURES.

THE SECOND PART

OF

The Conceited Pig.

LONDON:

JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,

AND NEW BOND STREET.

MDCCCLIV.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS AND CO.,
ALDERSGATE STREET.

MISS PECK'S ADVENTURES.

Any people who may happen to have read the story of "Wilful, the Conceited Pig," will recollect how he had called up his friend, Miss Peck, one night, from the henhouse, where there had been a great disagreement between her and Cock-a-doodle, and how they had set off together to the Queen's house, to tell Her Majesty some very curious news; also how they had very soon parted company, not being able to agree as to which was the right road, and how Wilful's journey had come to a very sad end, long before he was anywhere near the palace of Her Majesty the Queen. Now they may also like to know something of Miss Peck's adventures; and I am therefore going to relate them,

thinking that, perhaps, we may find almost as much to take warning by, in her history, as in Wilful's conceit, and the terrible punishment it met with.

Miss Peck felt rather lonely at first, when she found herself out in the dusky lane alone, at that time of night; but still she could not help chuckling to think how Wilful had persisted in taking the wrong road, and was travelling all for nothing, whilst she was sure to reach the Queen's house in time, if her poor legs would but carry her far enough.

"There is no need to go so fast, at any rate," she thought to herself. "If we got to the palace so early in the morning very likely Her Majesty the Queen would not be up, as I would have told Wilful, only he never will stop to listen to a word one has to say. Why our old David at home never gets up to give us our breakfast till Cock-a-doodle has walked round the yard several times, talked to all his family, told them his dreams—which, I must say, I am very tired of hearing—and crowed over and over again. I am sure if it were not for the early walk into the rick-pen, which I make a point of taking every morning, and the little bit of support that I get there, I should be dead with hunger long before breakfast time; but nobody ever seems to remember how delicate my

health is, and old David would not get up a bit the sooner, I verily believe, if I were dying. However, it is better than if Betsy Chopper had the feeding of us entirely, for I know that the smoke never begins to come out of the kitchen chimney till a little while before she gives us our dinner, and what the family do for something to eat I never can think. The poor ladies, I know, never look out of window or get a breath of air till the middle of the day in summer, and I believe they have no rick-pen to go to, and are obliged to wait till Betsy Chopper chooses to get up and feed them. The Queen may very likely not be as late as Betsy Chopper; but it is ten to one if she is as early as old David, so there can be no occasion to hurry oneself."

So Miss Peck walked on in a leisurely manner, picking her way along the dirty lane, as well as the darkness would allow, and every now and then stopping a minute or two to rest her poor legs by turns.

Now not very far from Miss Peck's own residence there stood a poor tumble-down cottage, in which lived an old woman, who kept a thin tortoiseshell cat and a little poultry. And on each side of the small wicket-gate leading to the cottage—which was close to the lane—stood a very thick yew-tree, cut

into the form of a sugar-loaf at the top. Miss Peck was not brave, and when she reached this part of the lane, and saw, as she thought, two black giants, with plumes on their heads, standing not far before her, she was so horribly frightened that she screamed with all her might, and was very near running back the way she came, faster than she had ever run before. However, she had just resolution enough to stop and think what was best to be done, when, strange to say, one of the giants seemed to cry out Cock-a-doodle-doo, in a voice of thunder, and, all at once, came flapping down upon poor Miss Peck, rolling her over in the mud, and nearly driving all the breath out of her body with the shock and the terror. Getting on her legs again somehow or other, she ran behind a little heap of stones, where she stood panting and trembling, and with ruffled feathers, when again the same hateful cry rang in her ears, repeated three times, even louder than before —"Cock-a-doodle-doo, Cock-a-doodle-doo, Cock-a-doodle-doo!" Scarcely daring to look round, and expecting every instant to be swallowed up alive, or torn to pieces by one of the giants, Miss Peck wished herself safe at home again, with all her might, in spite of Cock-a-doodle's tyranny, when, luckily,

there came a faint gleam of light, and she saw, as she thought, Cock-a-doodle himself sitting on the top of the little wicket-gate between the two yew-trees. Could it have been he who had given her such a fright on purpose, or had he come out all this way to find her, and bring her home, and tell her how sorry he was not to have shown her more attention? She crept a little nearer, and, hoping to move his pity, gave a faint cry, as if she were in great pain and distress. "Who is that?" said a voice, which was not Cock-a-doodle's; and Miss Peck replied directly "that she was an unfortunate young person who was travelling across the country on business of importance, and she hoped that the gentleman to whom she was speaking, whoever he might be, would take pity upon her, and protect her from the dangers which surrounded her, for, indeed, she never was so frightened in all her life, and she did not know how she should ever find courage to continue her journey."

"But, madam, might I ask," said the gentleman on the gate, "what the important business is, which obliges you to be on the road at this time of night?"

"I will tell you, sir, with the greatest pleasure," said Miss Peck, "although my poor nerves are so shaken that I can scarcely

speak, but if you could come a little nearer I should not be obliged to talk so loud."

"Oh, you will not disturb the old woman," said her new acquaintance, "and as to the old cat, I saw her go by some time ago, and I believe she is spending the evening with the young jackdaws, who live in the church-roof. She has taken a great fancy to that family lately, and says that she finds them very agreeable, though shy; but I should doubt whether they were very fond of *her*, for you must know, madam, that the old cat is, in my opinion, one of the most conceited and selfish persons that ever lived, and if the old woman knew all her bad ways I do not think that she could allow her to continue in the house."

"Ah, indeed!" said Miss Peck, "well do I know, sir, what it is to have to do with that sort of people. From your account I should fear that the old cat was very little better than Cock-a-doodle himself."

Miss Peck then proceeded to give a long history of Cock-a-doodle's unkindness to her, her own dreadful sufferings from spasms, which deprived her of her natural rest,—Miss Spangle's spitefulness, in continuing fast asleep without once offering to help her,—and then the whole account of Wilful's visit to the henhouse, and their setting off

together to tell the Queen that the stars were falling out of the sky.

"And now, sir," added Miss Peck, "perhaps you will do me the great kindness to tell me your name, for I have no doubt now, that it was entirely owing to your interference, that I was not swallowed alive by one of those horrible giants, which gave me such an alarm just now."

"My name, madam," answered the stranger, "is Cockielockie, at your service, but I think, owing to your youth and inexperience, you have probably mistaken these two respectable old yew trees, in one of which the seven ladies of my family are sleeping at this moment, for giants, or perhaps their shadows across the road deceived you, or it might be the old cat returning from her visit to the Jackdaws. At any rate, madam, here are no giants, I assure you, for the truth is that the old woman leads such a dull life that no giant ever comes near the place, and I have not seen so much as the face of Tim Scamp, the little pedlar, for the last six months. It is very sad to live so out of the world, and I must confess that I should like a little more society. The old woman is so particular and old-fashioned; and the cat is so ill-mannered and vulgar, that it is very trying

to one's patience, and I do not find much comfort in my own family, for I am sorry to say that they are always quarrelling. I cannot speak to one without the other's being jealous, and to tell the truth, (though I am sure you will not repeat it,) I was awoke just now by the screams of my two daughters, Partridge and Speckle, who had had their ears boxed by Mrs. Cockielockie, for saying that they knew I wished she was dead! If I do wish it, they need not have told her so, and now I shall never hear the last of it. If I could but get away for a time, it might blow over, or Mrs. Cockielockie might be gone."

"Well, my dear sir," said Miss Peck, interrupting him, "why cannot you come with me to the Queen? It would be an opportunity of introducing yourself to the very highest society, and I should be delighted with the honour of your company. Indeed, I really feel very lonely, travelling all by myself, and am very much in want of protection, which is just what I am sure, sir, you are always ready to afford to a poor weak young creature, like myself, though whenever one complains of helplessness, it seems to make some people, that I could mention, more spiteful and tyrannical than ever!"

"Believe me, dear madam," said Cockielockie,—who was very much pleased at the idea of paying a visit to the Queen,—"believe me, that never could be my case, I will accompany you instantly with the greatest pleasure, and I trust that, if we should meet with any enemies on the road you will find my spurs quite able to defend you from them. Under these circumstances, madam, I shall set off without giving my usual crow, which, hitherto, I have never failed to perform at this hour. It was my dear mother's first and last lesson to me. She took the greatest pains to teach it me when young, and I remember how vexed she used to be when I forgot my crows, or cut them so short that no one could understand what I said, or did not repeat them exactly at the right time. She told me that if I went on so I should be good for nothing, and might as well be boiled at once; and the last thing she said to me, before she disappeared, and I fear was boiled herself, was, 'Cockie, mind your crows.' To tell the truth, however, now, my dear Miss Peck, I am afraid of waking the ladies in the yew-tree. Mrs. Cockielockie would make such a fuss, and then the old woman might be disturbed, for though she is very deaf, I have heard the cat say that she

always hears when you most wish she should not; for there was a small piece of the tail of a red herring which she promised one evening at supper to give to her,—at least so Mrs. Puss told me,—and then she put it away in the cupboard, and went to bed, and forgot it! So the cat being hungry, could not go to sleep, and was just getting into the cupboard, to eat her own bit of fish, when down came the old woman to know what all that scratching and scrambling was about, and the cat was forced to pretend to be catching a mouse, and never got the herring after all, for the old woman locked it up, and took the key away with her. I think, therefore, madam, although it seems to be neglecting one's duties, that we had better set off as quietly as possible."

So saying, Cockielockie shook himself gently, brushed his feathers, scraped his claws, and then came down from the little wicket gate, on which he had all this time been sitting, and asked Miss Peck if she was now ready to go on.

Miss Peck, having quite recovered from her fright, had been impatient to proceed on her journey all the time that Cockielockie was talking, so on they went, talking pleasantly all the way of their different sufferings, and the hard trials they each of them

met with from undeserved persecutions at home.

And they went, and they went, and they went down the lane, round the turning, and up the hill to the left, till they saw something white moving slowly on before them. which, when they came nearer, seemed to be a duck, but its head hung down so wretchedly, its wings were so drooping, and its whole air so forlorn, that Miss Peck herself doubted, at first, what it could be. But when they came quite close, they saw that they were not mistaken, so Cockielockie, who had always a word for everybody, said in a cheerful manner:

"How do you do, Duckiedaddles? You are up early this dark morning. Where may you be going to, if I may venture to ask the question?"

The duck shook her head sadly, heaved a sigh, and said:

"Oh, Cockielockie, I am a poor wretched creature, who can find no pleasure in life, and have had great misfortunes, and so I am going to consult an old friend, who lives a little way off, about making my will, and then return home, and hang myself in the well rope, behind the carthouse."

"Oh, pray, my dear madam," exclaimed Miss Peck, "pray do not say such shocking

things, or you will quite overcome me, for my feelings are very soon upset, owing to my unfortunate spasms. I am sure that my friend, Cockielockie, will be able to do everything in the world for you, if you will only explain the case to him."

"Thank you, Hennypenny," answered the duck, while her tears fell fast: "I will tell you all about it, though I fear that Cockielockie will never be able to do me any good. My sorrow is owing to my having had my family taken away from me, and my own little ones brought up by a stranger, and one of the last persons whom I should ever have chosen to put them under. One evening I was returning home, having been out for a little walk round the shrubbery with my friend Mrs. Gobble, when I found that my nest was taken away, and so the tiresome life that I had been leading, sitting there, day after day, for hours together, was all trouble for nothing. It was the third time that the very same thing had happened to me, and whether it was one of Master Samuel's mischievous tricks, or, whether Jem, the old carter, who was always meddling with what did not concern him, was at the bottom of it, I could not guess, for I was then far from suspecting the right person; and so was

Mrs. Gobble, for I went to her directly, and though she was sorry to see me vexed, she said it was a good thing that I should not have to stay at home so much, for she was sure I must have been nearly moped to death, and she would not have led such a dull life, for all the little yellow ducklings that ever were seen. So I got over my disappointment as well as I could, and I remember that a party of us went out walking that evening, and the 'weather was beautiful, pouring rain every minute, and puddles running here and there, and everything so nice and wet, and I caught eleven large slugs, and felt much more contented. Indeed I had quite forgotten all about it, when, a long time afterwards, as I was coming in from a swimming match with some friends, one morning, what should I see but six or seven handsome little yellow ducklings, running in and out of a new house, which stood not far from the water. I looked very hard at them, for I suspected how it was, and as I passed close to the house, which was open in front, I looked in, and saw Mrs. Topknot sitting there as grand as could be, and spreading herself out as if she did not know how to be proud enough. She was always giving herself airs, I must tell you, and never was so civil to me as she

ought to have been, but being of a meek disposition myself, I just stopped for a minute, and said, 'Good morning, Mrs. Topknot. Whose is this lovely young family that you seem to have about you?' 'Whose?' she answered, as shortly as possible. 'Why your own to be sure, Mrs. Daddles, and I am going to bring them up, for everybody knows that you are such a gossiping, gadabout creature, that you are not fit to have the management of a family. You may think yourself very lucky that your young ones should be placed under the charge of such a wise and well-informed person as I am, instead of being left to shift for themselves, as they would be if they depended upon your care.'

"I was so full of grief and anger at hearing this speech, that I could hardly speak, and, as if to enrage me still more, Mrs. Topknot called out to the ducklings to come to her directly, and I saw that the little dears did not dare to disobey her; so in they ran, and she shuffled them all under her wings, and would not even let me look at them, but one got his head half-out, and peeped at me, as much as to say, that if he could do as he liked, he would not be squeezed up in that way long.

"'And do you really mean to refuse to

let me take away my own little ducklings, Mrs. Topknot?' said I, 'because, in that case I shall go immediately to Jem, the carter, and get him to wring your neck!'

"Mrs. Topknot only gave a scornful laugh and answered, 'As if anybody would mind what you said, indeed! You should have stayed at home, and attended to your own affairs instead of always sauntering about with that lazy Mrs. Gobble. Be thankful that your family are sure of a good education. I shall not allow them to get into any of the dirty, dabbling ways, that you, and all your relations, are so fond of, I can tell you!'

"'Very well, Mrs. Topknot,' I answered: 'I see you think yourself wiser than everybody else, as usual; but depend upon it, though you may bring up very good chickens, you will never make good ducklings as long as you live. It is quite a different thing, and so I shall tell Jem, the carter, since he has not the sense to know it already. Pray can you swim, Mrs. Topknot? Can you earn an independent living in a gutter? Can you eat slugs? You know that you, and all your family, are poor, helpless, delicate creatures, afraid of getting your feet wet, and obliged to live on the charity of Jem, the carter. How should

you be able to bring up young ducklings to do their duty in their own station? You are quite mistaken if you expect ever to make chickens of them. I know by the look of their feet, that they will take to the water in spite of you, and then pray what will you do? Just let them come with me, and I will soon show you what little ducklings are made for. You have no right to keep my children squeezed up in that corner, where they can scarcely breathe. I know you will kill them before you have done.'

"So I went on, begging and praying Mrs. Topknot to restore to me my own family, and even shedding tears to move her pity, but all in vain. She would not mind a word I said, and, in the greatest affliction, I went off to Mrs. Gobble, to ask her opinion about what was to be done. But Mrs. Gobble was just going out walking with a friend, and would hardly find time to listen to my story. She only said, that if I thought Jem, the carter, would understand anything about it, I should only be disappointed, for he was always doing the most foolish things, and making mischief in the yard in almost every family. I felt, therefore, that it was not of the least use to complain to him, for he would have been quite as likely to wring my

neck, as Mrs. Topknot's, and being weary of such an unkind world, and Mrs. Gobble not asking me to go with her and her friend I determined to hang myself in the well-rope, as I said; only as I have a small piece of cabbage-leaf behind the pig-sty, and two young snails in a corner of the garden-wall, I think it best to make my will; for, my dear Mr. Cockielockie, and Mrs. Henny-penny, you must now see that my distress is too great to admit of any relief."

"My name," said Miss Peck, rather angrily, as soon as Duckiedaddles ceased speaking, "is not Hennypenny, Mrs. Daddles; and I must say, though extremely sorry for your misfortunes, that I think grief must have confused your mind a little, or you would not have made such a mistake about a young person like myself. My name is Miss Peck, and I and my friend Mr. Cockielockie are on our way to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, to tell her that the stars are all falling out of the sky."

"And I think, Mrs. Daddles," interrupted Cockielockie, "that you cannot do better than come along with us, and then you will have an opportunity of laying your melancholy case before Her Majesty, who very likely will order Mrs. Topknot and Jem the carter's heads to be sent to her immediately;

for I know she is particular about her own family, and would be very angry if any one were to take them away from her, and instead of letting them grow into good little kings and queens, with crowns on their heads, as they ought to do, were to try to make them wear topknots and live upon barley meal."

Mrs. Daddles was very willing to agree to Cockielockie's proposal, for, as she said, she could see about making her will when she came back. So they went, and they went, and they went, until, turning a corner of the lane, what should they see walking towards them, in a grave and solemn manner, but a goose.

"Good morning, Duckiedaddles, Cockielockie, Hennypenny," said she, bowing very politely at the same time.

"My name, madam," said the unlucky Peck, taking care to answer before the others, "my name is Miss Peck; but you are quite correct as to my two companions, Mr. Cockielockie and Mrs. Duckiedaddles, who have had the kindness to accompany me on a journey of great importance, which it has been my duty to undertake. And I am sure, unused as I am to travelling alone, I do not know what I should do without the support of their society. Will you allow me

to ask, Mrs. Goosiepoosie, where you are going to so early in the morning?"

"I am going," answered Mrs. Goosiepoosie, putting on an air of great importance, "to make an early visit to Her Majesty the Queen, on very pressing business."

"To the Queen!" they all exclaimed at once. "Pray, madam, do us the favour to tell us your errand?"

"Why, to tell the truth," replied Goosiepoosie, "it is a secret known only at present to my own family, but I have no objection to mentioning it so such respectable people as yourselves, as I am sure you are quite to be trusted. You are aware that I and all my family have been accustomed from generation to generation, to dress in white, and have hitherto allowed our young ones to wear coats of the same colour as soon as they are old enough to take care of them. But at last we have quite grown tired of this style of dress. It was very well for our grandfathers and grandmothers, but now it looks old-fashioned and dowdy, and, besides requires a great deal of washing, which makes it expensive; and so I am going to beg the Queen to give an order for our having in future black coats, which will be much more becoming, and will entitle us to as high a place in society as the Turkey

family, who now give themselves such airs and graces over us—as if an old-fashioned British goose, whose family has belonged to the country and supported the state in all times, and has led an honest and quiet life from father to son, were not much more respectable than such upstarts as themselves, who half ruin all their friends, and cannot speak English so as to be understood."

"Very true, madam," exclaimed Cockielockie, "your observations have a great deal of weight, only I almost wonder that you should wish to adopt any imitation of the dress of these foreigners, instead of retaining that which your grandfathers and grandmothers seem to have found the most comfortable and convenient, and, I am sure, would never have changed for the sake of making themselves more like the Turkeys. If you are tired of white, why do you not ask leave to wear brown and red coats like ours, which have always been very much admired, and are so much handsomer than black ones?"

"Why, sir," rejoined Mrs. Goosiepoosie, "I do not see that your coats are any better than our own; and it is not very likely that Father Gander and all the heads of the family would have sent me off on such a long journey to Her Majesty just to ask her

leave to change our dress, for no reason at all."

"I thought you said, madam, just now," replied Cockielockie, rather slyly, "that you found your old white coats dowdy and expensive. I much fear, however, that you will be obliged to wear them some little time longer yet, for as you are going exactly the wrong way, it is not probable that you will ever reach the palace of Her Majesty the Queen."

"I beg your pardon," replied Goosiepoosie, "but as I consulted old Father Gander before I started, and have carefully attended to his directions, which were to keep straight on, without turning to the right leg or to the left, I cannot possibly have gone wrong."

"Well," exclaimed Miss Peck, rather sharply, "I can only tell you, madam, that *we* are now on our way to the residence of Her Majesty, on very important business indeed, and as we have already travelled some distance, we expect very shortly to arrive there. It is not likely that persons of our rank in life should not know where our gracious Sovereign lives, having, of course, often heard the bells ring on her birthday, and also assisted Betsy Chopper in clearing away the crumbs, after a feast that was given

us in honour of it, on a large table, under the chesnut trees, not very long ago. There were a great many cakes and curious things to eat, but the naughty children came swarming round the table, and stole them, before we knew of it, though they were all intended for us; so even Cock-a-doodle got nothing better than crumbs—and good enough for him, too. He gave Miss Spangle one of the largest he found, and never offered me a bit, although I was leaning against one leg of the table, close to him, at the time, and suffering agonies of pain from a sudden attack of cramp in my poor leg. But such is the way I have always been treated. However, madam, I can assure you that you had much better attend to what we say, and not go on in this direction, or you will never get to your journey's end."

"I am much obliged to you, madam, for your good advice," replied Goosiepoosie, with a formal bow, "but Father Gander is certain to be right, and I shall continue to follow the road which he pointed out."

"Then you are an obstinate goose for your pains," cried Cockielockie, much provoked, "and may wear your vulgar white coat all your life, for any chance there is of the Queen's giving you leave to change it."

Goosiepoosie made a very angry reply,

and the quarrel might have continued to this time, but just then old Simon Joggle, the carrier, was coming along the road, and so loud and vehement had been the dispute that they did not hear the wheels of his cart till it was quite close to them. He was driving pretty fast, and they were standing near the middle of the road, so that there was scarcely time to get out of the way. The unfortunate Miss Peck screamed violently, and in her agitation, not thinking where she was going, she ran under one of the cart wheels, and it was no longer any joke about her poor left leg, for the wheel went over it and broke the bone.

Her cries were so terrible, and there was such noise and confusion, and flapping of wings, at the same instant, that old Simon, who could not see in the glimmering light what was the matter, stopped his horse and got out of the cart. Poor Miss Peck, whose screams soon showed him where she was, tried to get away when he came near her, but she only fell down in great pain whenever she attempted to move. If the cramp in her leg, from which she used to suffer so much, especially when she was cross, had disabled her half as much as this sad accident, Cock-a-doodle could never have been so barbarous as to refuse to help her up the

henhouse stairs, if fifty Miss Spangles had been near him at the same time. It was in vain that she struggled, and screamed, and scrambled along the ground. She was soon in old Simon's clutches, who was quickly sitting in his cart again, with the reins in his hand, as if nothing had happened.

But I fear that something very sad *had* happened; and I am quite sure, whatever might be her fate, that poor Miss Peck was never more seen or heard of, although Cock-a-doodle thought it right to make every inquiry after her, and was very much shocked at the report which was whispered about the yard the next morning, that she had escaped from the henhouse, and gone off on a journey with young Master Wilful the conceited pig.

But what became of Cockielockie, Goosiepoosie, and Duckiedaddles? They had suffered a terrible fright, and almost lost their senses, when old Simon's cart came so suddenly upon them; Duckiedaddles, being the last to see the danger, in her haste, somehow knocked herself against one of the horse's legs, and was so stunned by the blow that she lay for some minutes quite insensible. When she recovered she could see nothing of her companions; old Simon's cart was just moving away, and there was a shrieking

sound from the inside, which Duckie thought —but it might have been fancy—must be like the voice of Miss Peck in a very bad spasm. When the cart was quite out of sight, Duckie hobbled along till she came to a little brook that crossed the road, and plunging gladly into it, she swam through an arch under the hedge, and along some meadows, till she came to a pond, where, to her great delight, she found several of her own relations enjoying an early swim. She told them her story, with many tears and complaints, as she had done to Cockielockie and poor Miss Peck, and begged to know whether she might remain with them, and so escape for ever from the tyranny and insolence of Mrs. Topknot and Jem the carter.

They told her that she was welcome to stay if she pleased, but it was right to mention that they were particularly subject to very severe misfortunes, in the frequent losses sustained by their families, as there was a house very near them, in which a large table was kept, and at any moment one of them might be seized, and taken in to stand upon this table, but not one had ever been brought back again. Duckiedaddles, however, thought that they only said this to frighten her, and felt quite sure that she

should be much happier here than at home, so she stayed, and led an easy life with her new friends—except a dispute every now and then—for some time, when, one morning, as they were going down to the pond, she and Curlytail were not to be seen amongst them, so they knew directly that they were taken in to stand upon the great table, and would never come out and swim in the pleasant water any more.

Goosiepoosie's story is soon told. She first flew over the hedge, and nearly frightened a red cow, who was lying in the grass on the other side, into fits; and then, recovering her own senses, set off home as fast as she could go. When she arrived there, she called all her companions around her, and told them that, after travelling a long way, and inquiring everywhere, she found that the Queen's house was not in any part of this country, and she was afraid that they should never be able to reach it but, that if they waited quietly, perhaps there might be some opportunity of offering up a petition to her on the subject of their complaint. So the geese consented to wait and as no opportunity of presenting their petition ever occurred, they have continued to wear their white coats ever since.

Poor Cockielockie had a dismal time of it

before he came to the end of *his* troubles. He, too, had flown over the hedge on the other side, and in his great terror, continued, sometimes flying, and sometimes running, till he came to a copse, where he thought he should be safe ; so he lay down in the thick grass, under a tree, scared and tired, and very much out of breath. Hearing nothing of his companions, and not seeing anything to alarm him, he remained there till the morning, dozing a little, and dreaming of the old cat, and Mrs. Cockielockie, and every now and then, starting up in the belief that all Farmer Cloverfield's waggons and horses were coming down the lane at full gallop, and that he had not time to get out of the way. All that day he wandered unhappily about the copse, picking up a few insects, but meeting with no acquaintance, and not able to find any way out, he felt very lonely and wretched, and when the daylight was nearly gone, he climbed up into a hazel tree, and tried to go to sleep. But there was such a rustling and twittering amongst a family of robins, who lodged just below him, and who were talking over their plans for the winter, and the changes which they meant to make in the spring, that it was long before he could close his eyes. He had barely done so, when a sudden rush

from below, and frightful sounds of pain and terror roused him from his short slumber. He flew instantly to the ground, and there, in the twilight, he distinctly saw his former companion, the old cat, standing with two murdered robins at her feet, while she greedily devoured a third.

"Why, Mrs. Puss," said he, for her mouth was too full to allow her to speak first, "may I ask how you came here, and what you are doing?"

"How came I here!" said she, swallowing down the last wing of the robin as fast as she could. "I should think I had as much business here as you have, Mr. Cockielockie, particularly if the old woman sends me, to get her a few nice little birds for her dinner to-morrow. Of course I must taste them first myself, to see whether they are tough, and I am sure the one I have just swallowed was tough enough to choke me. I wonder how I could get it down at all. I hope, for the old woman's sake, that the others will be more tender. And, perhaps, you will be good enough to tell me, Mr. Cockielockie, where you have been all this time, for there has been such a to-do at home about you, as never was known since Dame Featherleg drowned herself in the well: Mrs. Cockielockie in hysterics, all your family sobbing

and sighing, and the old woman giving you up for lost, and hobbling off to Farmer Cloverfield's to inquire whether Mr. Brush had been seen in the neighbourhood lately. For goodness' sake go home as fast as you can, and make their minds easy, or Mrs. Cockielockie will be setting off in search of you, with all the family. If there should be anything that you do not wish mentioned, you may depend, Mr. Cockielockie, on my keeping it to myself, for I always say, the best of us would sometimes get into trouble, if our friends made a point of repeating every little thing that they might happen to know about us, that seemed to them contrary to one's duty, and all that! So, if you will just take that turning to the right, Mr. Cockielockie, and then the next to the left, you will be on the way to the cottage, and I will come after you as soon as I have convinced myself that these nasty birds are too tough to be worth carrying home, which I strongly suspect to be the case. We shall have plenty of time to talk over our adventures as we walk along, for it is a good step from hence for you, though nothing for me, who am an excellent walker."

Cockielockie thanked Mrs. Puss for her directions, and immediately set off on the way she pointed out, feeling very thankful

for the prospect of returning to his family, and sleeping once more in his comfortable old place in the yew-tree. When Mrs. Puss, who very soon came up with him, as she promised, heard his story, she said, that if he took her advice, he would never set off on such an errand again, for if anything so important as the stars falling out of the sky, had really happened, she and the old woman should have been sure to hear of it, and could let the Queen know, without troubling a meddlesome person like Miss Peck, to whom Her Majesty would never have thought of listening for a moment.

So Cockielockie lived very quietly with the old woman ever after; the Queen has never been told from that day to this that the stars were falling out of the sky, and things have gone on much the same notwithstanding. Indeed, I know some people who think it a great pity that Miss Peck and her companions did not stay at home, and mind their own concerns. If they had but thought less of themselves, they would not have been so discontented with their condition, but there is an old proverb that, "to a crazy ship all winds are contrary," and as, according to another homely saying, "Every path has a puddle," those who spend their time in complaining, and turning this way

and that, to escape from things that they do not like, and to better themselves in the world, are neither likely to be very useful to others, or to lead happy and prosperous lives themselves.

MASTERS AND CO., PRINTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET, LONDON.

MISS PECK'S ADVENTURES.